

THE CAPE COD VOTER

VOLUME 50 ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2009

CALENDAR

HOLIDAY TEA

Saturday December 5 2:00 to 4:00 pm

Last day to register – Tuesday, December 1

Betsy Bray -- 508 432-4824

**Tuesday, December 1
9:30 am**

**LWVCCA Board
Cape Cod 5, Route 134, Dennis**

**Monday, December 7
8:30 am**

**Chatham Hot Topics
Old Harbor Cafe**

**Monday, December 7
10:00 to 12:00 am**

**Aaron Education Trust Meeting
Snow Library, Orleans**

**Thursday, December 10
7:00 pm**

International Human Rights Day

Saturday, December 12

Happy Hanukah

**Wednesday, December 16
9:30 coffee, 10 am meeting**

**Chatham-Harwich Unit Meeting
Harwich Community Center, Rm 3**

Friday, December 25

Merry Christmas

SAVE THIS DATE

**Wednesday, February 17, 2010
10:00 am**

Tour of Tri-Town Septage Plant

The League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area
P. O. Box 2347, Orleans MA 02653
508 945 0511

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

On Sunday Nov. 15, I attended the Lower/Outer Cape League unit meeting. It proved to be one of the more exciting meetings I've attended recently. It was exciting for two reasons: first, the speakers were good and the subject matter important and timely, and second, because twenty members gave up their Sunday afternoon to attend!

The subject was regionalization. Selectman David Schopfer of Eastman told of a four town meeting of selectmen (all twenty of them) that resulted in the "IMC" (Inter-Municipal Cooperation Committee) which is taking a close look at what he calls the "low hanging fruit" on the regionalization tree, things such as certain kinds of plans, sharing some pieces of equipment – the full list contains 25 items for consideration.

Mr. Schopfer was quick to point out that the current economic conditions, an "adversity," have created a significant window of opportunity for inter-town cooperation. For example, with the current greater threat of taxes increasing ("Town ego costs taxpayers a lot of money"), the more persons are able to see the advantages of regionalization.

A League member asked, "What can *we* do to increase the chances for regionalization?" The answer according to the speakers (Sim McGrath, selectman from Orleans was the other speaker) was: 1) write letters to the local newspapers, 2) phone your selectman – one phone can make quite an impression in a small town, 3) be persistent.

It strikes me that it is particularly timely for the League to undertake some intentional advocacy on regionalization while we have the "adversity" opportunity. Perhaps, for the Cape, greater regionalization is the silver lining behind the economic downturn cloud. That's what I think; what do you think?

I close with very warm wishes to you that your holidays will be filled with joy and peace.

Judy

BOARD NOTES

The remittance envelope to raise funds for the Ed Trust is ready for printing; the solicitation letter raising money for both the Ed Trust and the Operating Budget is in progress.

The Board decided not to have a remittance envelope to raise funds for the operating budget, but Judy will asked the Ed Trust to increase the percentage of each of the per-member payments it makes to the State and National leagues.

Rather than take on another study (on Child Care), the Board decided to make child care the focus of the April forum.

Betsy asked for ideas for a speaker and venue for the February forum for which the theme is women's rights. Many board members supported the idea of asking Therese Murray to speak on a woman's place in politics and women's issues. Another idea was Mindy Todd of WCAI.

Karen reported that there are some problems with the timely posting of the County Commissioners' online agenda and with accessing archived meeting notes on their website.

Sheila Lyons, Chair of the County Board of Commissioners, reported to the Board on many issues facing County government.

Rhondda reported that the LWVUS task force on health care, of which she has been a member, will end at the end of 2009. The educational articles that the task force has written are available on the LWVUS web site.

The Board decided to be aware of but not take any action on the "bed tax."

Judy reported that the Environment Committee is considering a brochure on waste water, but will need permission from the Ed Trust to finance it before moving ahead.

Betty Floyd, Secretary

HOT TOPICS IN CHATHAM

Chatham Unit members are invited for breakfast with Cam Koblisch, Chatham's representative to Cape Light Compact and chair of the new Energy Comm. on Mon., Dec. 7 from 8:30-9:30 at the Old Harbor Cafe.

Hope to see you there! if anyone needs a ride call Florence Seldin 945-4464.

Florence Seldin

"mailto:florencecape@comcast.net"

ORLEANS – EATING LOCAL

A small but attentive Hot Topics audience nearly filled the alcove at the Orleans Chocolate Sparrow Wednesday November 4 to hear Darnell Caffoni explain the work of the Orleans Agricultural Task Force. Established by the Board of Selectmen last February, the Task Force is charged with representing the Town's agricultural community and interests and with developing recommendations for sustainable agriculture-based economic activities. An activity included in the charge is the analysis of the appropriate placement of an Agricultural Commission within Orleans' governmental structure and operations. According to a link at the Town's website, "AgComs are created at Town Meeting to represent farming interests in the town-but they do not have any legal mandate or enforcement authority." Cape Towns with Agricultural Commissions include Barnstable, Brewster, Dennis, Falmouth, Harwich and Yarmouth. The Task Force is expected to report to the Selectmen by January 1, 2010. Task Force member Caffoni is also a member of the Orleans Farmers' Market and a supporter of the County Extension's "Cape Cod Buy Fresh Buy

Local” initiative. Caffoni reflected on the long history of Cape Cod agriculture. As recently as the mid-1960s, he said, agriculture was the largest industry on the Cape, with cranberries, turnips and asparagus being the top farm products.

NEWS FROM NATIONAL

As part of its Membership Initiative, the LWVUS has developed a “Storybank” program. “[The bank] is a collection of stories from League members across the country. The stories reflect the value of being a member of the League . . . what the League means to members like you . . .” The LWVUS believes there “is no better way to explain the benefits of membership than to share stories from current LWV members . . .”

It occurs to me that this is something we might do at the local level as well. Some of our members’ stories, like the stories that were shared last year at Ocean Edge, could easily be part of our own Storybank if they were written up. We could post some on our own website as a testimony to the LWVCCA, with or without names attached as the writer prefers.

Is this something you would be interested in doing? If so, simply write one or two short paragraphs telling why you joined our League, or, a particular event of the LWVCCA of which you are proud, or something the LWVCCA accomplished that has made a bit of a difference in our community/ies.

Email your story to me and Harriet Klebanoff, our webmaster, and I will happily review it for use on our website. Thank you

Judy

CAPE COD REGIONAL GOVERNMENT KNOWN AS BARNSTABLE COUNTY Charter Review Committee Update

Our current Charter provides that "at least once every five years, . . . the assembly of delegates shall provide for a special committee to be established which shall be charged with the responsibility of reviewing the then existing charter and ordinances of the county for the purpose of determining if any amendments or revisions may be necessary or desirable. . . Reports with recommendations, should be submitted to the Assembly of Delegates. . ." (Section 9-4 (a))

The current Charter Review Committee (CRC) consist of nine members, five members from the Assembly of Delegates, one representative from the County Commissioners' and four members representing the towns. The Assembly members are: Speaker of the Assembly, Ron Bergstrom of **Chatham**, Leo Cakounes of **Harwich**, Teresa Martin of **Eastham**, and Charlotte Striebel of **Yarmouth**. County Commissioner Sheila Lyons of **Wellfleet** representing the

Commissioners' and town representatives include: **Barnstable** Town Councilor Greg Milne, Michael Corgan of **Falmouth**, and Ed Larkin of **Mashpee**, all of whom served on their towns' charter review committees and Selectman Fred Gaechter of **Truro**, who was a member of his town's charter and bylaw review committee.

The committee voted to elect Fred Gaechter, chair and Charlotte Striebel, vice chair. They have received an overview of the 11 articles of the county's home rule charter by County Administrator Mark Zielinski. County counsel Bob Troy has also advised members regarding the scope of the review process. The **CRC** can question every element of the regional government's charter and their ordinances and they are reviewing the document page by page. Some members have shown a strong interest in specifics such as: the weighted vote of the Assembly of Delegates, the number of county commissioners', terms of office, content and structure of the Charter as a cohesive and functional document are just a few of the things under consideration.

In a follow up to some of these questions the committee was advised that "the Charter provides that all amendments to the Charter be ratified by the voters of Barnstable County at a state election ballot. Certain amendments-those that relate to the composition, mode of election or terms of office of the legislative body or the mode of election or appointment or term of office of the chief executive or administrative office.." - may not be placed on the ballot until the General court approves a Special Act that has been requested through a Petition by the Assembly of Delegates and has also received the approval of the Board of County Commissioners."

The CRC members want to keep to their schedule tight so they don't miss the deadline for getting proposed changes on the ballot. I'm sure that some of you remember from the last Charter Review there were some deadline issues that resulted in the recommendations of the CRC not getting on the ballot in time.

The Committee will be posting their meeting notes on the County website soon and they are trying to get the public more engaged in the review process.

Nancy Curley and Charles Radar as well as other Observer Corp members have been in attendance and all are welcome. Their next scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at 4:00 pm. at the 1st District Courthouse Route 6A Barnstable.

ORLEANS, LOWER CAPE UNITS DISCUSS REGIONALIZATION

The Orleans and Lower Cape November 15th unit meeting offered a stimulating discussion of current regional approaches to local issues. Orleans selectmen Sims McGrath and selectman David Schropfer of Eastham brought us up to date on the issues confronting the towns which might be addressed through regional sharing, the actions underway and some of the obstacles and resistances involved. They were joined by LWV member and county commissioner Sheila Lyons who added her perspective to the discussion. Mary Lou Petitt, former Eastham member of the Assembly of Delegates, also contributed. The discussion was lively and informative. Some of the many suggestions and insights brought forward are listed here:

Representatives of 4 of the towns of the lower cape have been meeting regularly as an Intermunicipal Cooperation Committee since March 2009 and a large number of common interests have emerged. The current fiscal adversity facing towns has been a positive motivation for consideration of regional approaches. Simply sharing information between towns has led to sharing resources, and saving towns money. Focus on particular problems is productive rather than a “global” approach. Working together is made more difficult by the varying existing governmental structures and bylaws, such as levels of authority, personnel practices, collective bargaining agreements, etc. Orleans and Eastham have asked the Cape Cod Commission to provide consultant services to explore the feasibility of a joint Police Department. In addition to the structural issues, major resistance lies in individual towns’ fears of loss of control.

Major issues are facing towns which they can’t handle alone, particularly those involving needed infrastructure investment. Barnstable County Regional Government can work in partnership with towns to meet these problems on a regional basis when appropriate.

The situation demands a coordinated marketing plan to help various segments of the population to understand the necessity and positive results from regional approaches. Here the County could play a central role. Discussions similar to this session should be encouraged by various civic and other local organizations throughout the County, including second home owner’s associations.

Jari Rapaport

International Human Rights Day

Members of the LWVCCA are invited to join the Barnstable County Human Rights Commission in celebrating International Human Rights Day on December 10, 2009. The celebration will take place at 7pm at the Harwich Community Center and will feature comments from Sgt. Carrie Lopes of the Provincetown Police Department. The Cornerstone Award will also be presented. We have worked with the Commission for several years in studying immigration issues in our County. International Human Rights Day was designated by the United Nations in 1950.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE NEWS

The Environment Committee is continuing its study of the Cape waste water problems. We have many copies of the League’s pamphlet WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE and of the Cape Cod Water Protection Collaborative brochure THE COLOR OF WATER--BRING BACK THE BLUE. Call Erica Parra for copies – 508-255-3116 or pick them up at the Christmas Tea.

In order to better follow the complicated waste water debates in the various towns Committee member Jane Corlette has compiled a list of acronyms commonly used when discussing waste water issues, which we will make available for the general membership.

Also to better understand and participate in the debate we have a glossary of technical terms given us by Gussie McKusick which we will be glad to give to anyone interested.

We are planning a trip to the Tri-Town septage plant in Orleans on Wednesday, February 17 at 10:00am. After the tour we will meet to discuss waste water issues. More details will be in the next issue of the Voter. This will be a combined meeting of the Environment Committee and the Orleans, Brewster and Lower Cape Units. Our towns are under enormous pressure to assure clean water and satisfactory septic facilities and to face the expense involved. Erica Parra

CHATHAM—HARWICH UNIT TO MEET DECEMBER 16

The Chatham/Harwich Unit is looking forward to an important unit meeting, **Wednesday, Dec 16**. Our guest will be **Arlene Hirsch, Executive Director of WE CAN**, who will talk to us about that great work the Harwich-based organization is doing for women in the Cape community undergoing challenging life transitions. With programs ranging from assistance with resume-writing to computer skills, free legal clinics, divorce support groups and more, WE CAN helps women find increased opportunity, self-sufficiency and stability in their lives.

All LWVCCA members—and their guests—are invited to come and hear how this innovative grassroots organization is making a difference in women's lives right in our back yard.--A prelude to our 2010 year marking the 90th anniversary of women's suffrage.

Please join us at the Harwich Community Center, Room 3. Refreshments at 9:30, meeting will start at 10:00. Contact Nancy Erskine 945-2163 or email at nancybillersk@comcast.net

THANK YOU

I'd like to thank my League friends for the many lovely sympathy cards I received and for your kind words of encouragement, as I coped with the loss of my Mom. It's truly been a great comfort to realize how many of you have been thinking of me. **With appreciation,**

Debbie Aikman

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